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## MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT

### RESOLUTION

*New Delhi, the 13th December, 1952*

No. 55-M.A.(4)/51.—The Government of India in the late Ministry of Commerce in their Resolution No. 55-M.I.(1)/48, dated the 28th January 1950, constituted a Committee known as the Deck Passenger Committee consisting of Shri S. Jagannathan, I.C.S., Chairman, Shri C. A. Buch, Shri M. C. Veerabahu, M.P., Shri Bidesh Kulkarni, Shri P. Kodanda Rao and Shri Hemanta Kumar Basu, Members, and Shri C. R. B. Menon, Member-Secretary, with the following terms of reference:—

- (1) To examine the prevailing conditions of travel in the various unberthed passenger services to and from Indian ports, and on the Indian Coast.
- (2) To make recommendations regarding the continuance of such services on all or any of the various routes, and whether in the event of discontinuance, berthed services should be substituted.
- (3) To recommend measures which should be taken to prevent overcrowding on ships and to secure safer, better and generally improved conditions of travel in such unberthed services as should be continued, the effect of such measures on the level of fares being kept in view and indicated. In formulating its recommendations in the matter of improvements, the Committee should take note of the Indian Merchant Shipping Act, 1923, relating to unberthed passenger ships and the various rules made thereunder; the Simla Rules, 1931, and the Revised International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1948. In addition to other recommendations which the Committee may make, it should make definite recommendations in respect of both existing and new ships as to—
  - (i) modification of the existing rules regarding allotment and measurement of space for passengers including alteration of the present scale of space allowance, the desirability of introducing dormitory accommodation and providing bunks or sleeping platforms, exclusion of irregular spaces such as hatchways, provision of separate accommodation for families and the provision of baggage accommodation;
  - (ii) improvements required in the existing standards of ventilation, latrine accommodation and water supply;
  - (iii) improvement of amenities including catering arrangements, cooking places and recreation facilities;

(iv) Improvement of the constructional and Safety standards prescribed at present in the Simla Rules, 1931, with a view to facilitate consideration of the amendment of those Rules.

2. The Committee issued a detailed questionnaire, held several meetings at important passenger ports in India and gathered oral evidence from representatives of shipping companies, passenger associations and technical experts. The Chairman and members visited various unberthed passenger and pilgrim ships and travelled some distances on the regular services of certain unberthed passenger ships to see the conditions of travel for themselves. The Committee also deputed two investigators to perform round voyages to Mombasa and Singapore and from Calcutta to Madras via Rangoon to report on the conditions of travel on these important services and to record the opinions of a cross section of the unberthed passengers. The Committee submitted its report to the Government of India in November 1950. The report has already been published.

3. The task before the Committee was one of considerable magnitude involving exploration, with due regard to economic factors, of remedial measures for difficulties and evils which had persisted for many decades. These factors included the high operating costs of ships, the possibility of adaptation of existing ships to provide improved standards, the limited prospects of additional tonnage being brought into operation, and the position regarding supply and demand for passenger space in individual services. The Committee made in all 52 specific recommendations. As the recommendations raised issues of a far-reaching nature, the Government of India considered it desirable to obtain the views of the Maritime State Governments, port administrations, ship owners and other authorities. The practical aspects of implementing some of the more important recommendations were also discussed at a meeting of the representatives of the shipping companies in New Delhi on the 22nd August 1952.

4. The recommendations made by the Committee fall broadly under four categories:—

- (a) Improvements in conditions of unberthed travel, such as provision of bunks, increased space, better catering and other amenities.
- (b) Improved facilities ashore for the unberthed passengers.
- (c) Improved safety conditions e.g. increased provision of Life Saving Appliances; and
- (d) Special provision by Government for safeguarding the interests and the welfare of unberthed passengers by the appointment of
  - (1) Passenger Committees for Mercantile Marine Department districts and sub-committees for ports of intermediate importance, and
  - (2) Passenger Welfare Officers.

5. Category (a) above covers by far the most important group of recommendations involving several intricate problems relating to structural improvements to unberthed passenger ships. So far as new ships are concerned, the Government of India accept the view that such ships should present no difficulty and that the recommendations made by the Committee under this category should be applied to them in full. On the other hand, existing ships will require structural alterations to comply with the recommendations and these will result in reducing their passenger carrying capacity necessitating in some cases adjustments in the level of fares. The Government of India have not been deterred by these considerations, as, in their view, the existing conditions of travel cannot be tolerated any longer and it would be wholly unjustifiable to defer badly needed improvements for an indefinite period till the existing ships are replaced by new ships in the normal course. They have accordingly come to the conclusion that deck travel should be abolished on voyages between India and Africa and that substantial improvements in the conditions of travel should be effected in the other services as recommended by the Committee and have approved of action being taken as explained below.

6. The principal recommendations under category (a) are the following:

- (1) Provision of bunks and/or provision of increased space where passengers are allowed to be carried on deck.
  - (a) In services which involve "long voyages" lasting more than 120 hours *viz* between India and Africa, the ships should be required to be fitted with bunks for all passengers at the earliest practicable date, thereby abolishing deck travel completely.

- (b) In other overseas services which last more than 48 hours, it should be the aim to abolish deck travel in a few years' time but meanwhile (i) as an immediate measure the space to be provided for deck passengers should be increased from 9 sq. ft. to 12 sq. ft. (exclusive of the airing space to be provided for non self-airing upper 'tween deck and lower 'tween deck passengers as under the existing regulations) and (ii) bunks should be provided for 25 per cent. of the passenger capacity of the ship.
- (c) In the coastal services also, the space provided for passengers should be increased according to the scale recommended by the Committee, which is different for voyages lasting over 24 hours and for shorter voyages as on the Koukan Coast. In the case of the latter, the Committee were impressed with the need for keeping costs down to the utmost extent for the class of passenger who ordinarily travels deck on these services and have recommended only a small increase in the space to be provided.
- (d) In all these services, only those spaces will be allowed to be measured for passengers which are specifically approved by the Government Surveyor as being suitable in all respects. In each deck or compartment baggage racks should be provided on space equivalent to 5 per cent. of the floor area of the deck.

(2) Provision of

- (i) fans on the scale indicated on all non self-airing between decks;
- (ii) larger supply of fresh water for drinking;
- (iii) wash places with running fresh water;
- (iv) water taps or showers for baths;
- (v) dressing rooms;
- (vi) latrines upto double the number;
- (vii) greater hospital facilities on board.

7. The Government of India accept all these recommendations. At the instance of the company operating the India-Africa service, the Government have issued instructions for the survey of its ships jointly by the Government and the company's technical officers to ensure the implementation of the recommendations. The main effect of this will be to reduce the carrying capacity of ships. The company has stated that it will find it necessary to increase the fares, the precise extent of which will be settled only after the joint survey has been completed.

The Government also accept the recommendations regarding the approval of passenger space and the provision of baggage racks, but propose to permit the ships engaged in the coastal services, to reckon within the prescribed baggage space all space already provided or to be provided for the purpose, under benches and/or seats. They do not, however, consider it necessary to adopt the Committee's suggestion to prescribe, for passengers who pay a higher fare than the lowest class and travel "Upper or Reserved Deck" on certain coastal services, proportionately larger deck space, as these passengers enjoy certain other advantages. They also feel that suitable exemption where necessitated by serious technical difficulties may be allowed in regard to the recommendation regarding the provision of fans.

The Bombay-Karachi and Bombay-Mangalore services on the coast have recently been reorganised and extended up to Cochin. When the Committee reported, these voyages were of duration between 24 and 48 hours. In view of the special difficulties of these extended services, the Government have no objection to applying to them only such of those recommendations of the Committee as are applicable to voyages lasting between 24 and 48 hours, so long as passengers are not being booked for a journey longer than Bombay-Cochin or Bombay-Karachi or vice versa.

As regards the Konkan services the objective of the Committee was to improve conditions on the service to the extent feasible without increasing the cost of travel. The company operating this service has agreed not to increase the fares as a result of the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee.

8. The Committee have made several recommendations for improvement in catering arrangements, shore facilities and for passenger welfare. The Government accept these recommendations and have already asked the authorities concerned to give effect to them. The need for arranging facilities for the purchase of tickets without needless delay and inconvenience, for adopting effective measures for the eradication of corrupt practices in the sale of tickets and in the handling of baggage

have been particularly stressed. Most of the Indian ports which handle large unberthed passenger traffic have now provided reasonable facilities for passengers, including sheds equipped with modern amenities. Further amenities are under the consideration of the port authorities.

9. The Committee have referred to the delay involved in the examination of the baggage of deck passengers by the Customs. Steps to remedy this position have been already taken by the Collectors of Customs who make every effort to post as many additional officers as possible for this purpose. The volume of examination work is, however, not uniform on all days and it is not practicable to retain staff permanently on the basis of the peak traffic. At some ports, however, batches of Officers are being moved quickly from one port to another as a temporary measure to cope with work on peak days.

10. The Government of India accept the Committee's recommendation regarding the establishment of permanent Deck Passenger Committees. They have already issued orders for their early constitution. The Committees will have paid Secretaries appointed by the Government. The recommendation regarding the appointment of Passenger Welfare Officers has also been accepted and the necessary posts already sanctioned.

The Committee have suggested that a cess should be levied on all unberthed passengers to meet the recurring costs of the permanent committees and the Passenger Welfare Officers. The Government have carefully considered the matter and have decided that the levy should not be imposed now, the question being reviewed after the new arrangements have been tried for a few months.

11. The Committee's recommendations regarding Safety measures on board ships have to be considered in the light of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea adopted in London in 1948 and this involves consultations with countries interested in deck passenger traffic. The Government agree with the Committee that safety standards should be progressively improved but decisions on the actual standards to be enforced can be based only upon international agreement. It is the Government's intention to formulate proposals on this subject in consultation with shipping companies concerned with Indian services with a view to convening a conference of the countries interested to revise the existing rules.

12. The Government of India desire to express their appreciation of the services rendered by the Chairman and members of the Committee for their valuable report.

S. CHAKRAVARTI, Joint Secy.